

ENGLISH GRAMMAR

A FUNCTION-BASED INTRODUCTION

Volume II

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(96) Definition of the reciprocal clause:**a. Semantic:**

Two like events occur, with the subject of one being the object of the other, and vice versa. The two participants thus *act upon each other* reciprocally.

b. Syntactic:

The two events are coded as a single clause with a conjoined (or plural) subject. The object of that clause is expressed as the reciprocal pronoun 'each other'.

8.7.2. Semantic features

As an illustration of the relation between conjoined simple event clauses and their reciprocal counterparts consider:

(97) Direct-object relation (transitive):**a. Conjoined simple clauses:**

The woman saw **the child**
and the child saw **the woman**

b. Corresponding reciprocal:

The woman and the child saw **each other**

(98) Indirect-object relation (intransitive):**a. Conjoined simple clauses:**

The man talked **to the woman**
and the woman talked **to the man**

b. Corresponding reciprocal:

The man and the woman talked **to each other**

(99) Indirect object relation (bi-transitive):**a. Conjoined simple clauses:**

The woman gave a rose **to the man**
and the man gave a rose **to the woman**

b. Corresponding reciprocal:

The woman and the man gave roses **to each other**

As noted earlier,³⁸ a reciprocal clause — much like other cases of conjoined NPs — is not the full semantic equivalent of two conjoined simple

clauses. Rather, the semantic context for coding two reciprocal acts as a single reciprocal clause demands two associated conditions:

- (a) That the two events are roughly **simultaneous**; and
- (b) That the two events are in some way **related**.

Under the scope of the *habitual* modality, condition (a) above may seem inapplicable. Thus, at least superficially the conjoined clauses in (100a) below seem to be semantically interchangeable with the reciprocal clause (100b):

- (100) a. John loves **Mary** and Mary loves **John** <===>
- b. Mary and John love **each other**

More clearly, event-pairs whose two members occurred at different times, at different places, or in other disparate contexts, do not show logical equivalence with their reciprocal counterparts. Thus compare:

(101) **Disjointed time:**

- a. John hugged Mary **yesterday**
 and she hugged him **today** *<===>
- b. John and Mary hugged each other

(102) **Disjointed location:**

- a. Mary saw John **in the street**
 and he saw her **on the bus** *<===>
- b. Mary and John saw each other

(103) **Disjointed circumstances:**

- a. John consulted Mary **about his job**
 and she consulted him **about her doctor** *<===>
- b. John and Mary consulted each other

One must emphasize that the fundamental semantic issue here is neither time nor place nor circumstances *per se*, but rather the conceptual perspective of **event integration**. With some event types, a reciprocal perspective is not only possible but also typical — even under conditions of temporal and spatial separation. As illustrations, consider:

(104) **Reciprocals with disjointed location:**

John lived in **New York** and Mary in **Los Angeles**,

- a. and they **wrote each other** regularly.
- b. and they **called each other** every night.
- c. and they **missed each other** terribly.